

ARTICLE APPEARED  
ON PAGE A15

BOSTON GLOBE  
23 December 1981

# From Europe, a loud voice that should be heard in the White House

**DAVID NYHAN**

Our beloved President, game and good-natured as he may be, is a stubborn fellow. He's a little hard of hearing when it comes to heeding voices of doubt about the wisdom of his policies.

Like every ideologue who takes power, he's forced to moderate once he's in command. It just takes him a while, whether he's climbing back from being way out on the economic limb, or on defense.

Last summer he turned the old tin ear to the Democrats baying about the incompatibility of his spending and tax programs. Not even the scandalous doubts of David Stockman's "trickle-down" musings moved him, or Wall Street's deafening "no thanks." So he's about to be forced

into an embarrassing climb-down from his opposition to raising some of the taxes he foolishly cut in the flush of budgetary victory.

Lately he's been dealing with fears of nuclear war. His approval rating has skidded below 50 percent in recent polls, and the AP-NBC poll shows three out of four Americans now believe the United States is likely to become involved in a nuclear war over the next few years.

He had advance warning of this. His campaign pollster gets \$1 million a year from the Republican National Committee to poll on a daily basis. And the sharp drop of support for Reagan among American women comes from female fears that Reagan might blunder into war.

Asked about the thousands of Europeans who've trooped through foreign capitals this year in demonstrations against nuclear weapons, the President said: "Oh, those demonstrations. You could have used newsreels from the '60s in America. Those are all sponsored by a thing called the World Peace Council, which is bought and paid for by the Soviet Union."

As it turns out, the Council is identified by the CIA as a Soviet front, active in 130 countries. But Reagan seems to be succumbing to a Hollywood over-simplification of "good guys versus bad guys." We all assume the Soviets wish us ill. But writing off the protesters makes as little sense as writing off every Vietnam protester as a Commie dupe or worse. Didn't he learn anything from the '60s?

Of the leading figures in the new Administration, Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger makes the most rational case for the Reagan policies of spend-to-remain-secure. In Boston last week, Weinberger told The Globe his view of those European demonstrations, now interrupted by the despairing military crackdown in Poland.

He characterized them as groups on environmental matters and gay rights but with a common thread for "unilateral disarmament." "They believe armament is wrong and that regardless of what the Soviets or anybody else does, we should not arm or their country should not arm."

The AP-NBC poll showed Americans believe, by a 48-44 percent margin, this Administration talks too much about nuclear war.

But if Americans feel this Administration talks too loosely of nuclear war, what of Europeans, who've heard Reagan and his men discuss the possibility of nuclear exchange limited to their patch of earth?

"Responsible people of all ages throughout western Europe are extremely worried by the possibility of a nuclear war being fought on their lands. These fears have been accentuated by rash statements of American leaders implying that a European nuclear war would not necessarily extend to the US," contends Herbert Scoville, a former CIA official and US arms control negotiator now head of the private Arms Control Association.

Those Europeans who took to the streets are not all environmental freaks, homosexuals or leftwing kooks. Look at it this way: suppose the leader of France or West Germany had it in his power to set off a nuclear blast here, and limit it to our continent? Would you protest, or not?

David Nyhan is a member of The Globe staff.